

Hobbies

Misprints in a \$10 bill increase its value at least tenfold

By Roger Boye

Today's column answers more questions about coins and paper money.

Q—While working as a bank cashier, I found an unusual \$10 bill with upside down serial numbers and an off-center design. Is the bill authentic? If so, what happened and how much might it be worth to a collector?

M. N., Chicago

A—Uncle Sam adds serial numbers and seals to the front side of "greenbacks" in a separate printing operation. Your \$10 bill apparently entered the press at a 180-degree rotation from normal, creating an unusual error note that often sells for at least \$100 if in uncirculated condition.

Also, your misprinted bill might be worth even more than most, thanks to a "downward shift" in the basic front-side design.

Q—After reading your articles about the rare 1990 proof sets with no-S Lincoln pennies, I was wondering why some coins I get in change have no mint mark while others bear a "P" or "D."



Upside-down serial numbers and Treasury seals and a downward shift in the printing process make this sawbuck worth \$100.

H. J., Chicago Heights

A—Denver-made coins have carried a "D" since the Denver Mint opened in 1906, but for many years almost all circulation-bound coins produced in Philadelphia carried no mint mark. In 1980, the government added a "P" to all Philadelphia coins except Lincoln cents.

Some officials feared that putting a "P" mint mark on Lincolns would encourage collectors to hoard the "penny," which had been in short supply in the

late 1970s.

Since 1968, proof coins have carried an "S" mint mark to show that they were made in San Francisco. Most coins produced in San Francisco for circulation also have born the "S," including Lincoln cents issued from 1968 to 1974.

Q—My father gave us a \$1 silver certificate of series 1923 that's much larger than today's paper money. Is it still "good money"? Can I exchange the bill for silver?

R. F., Chicago

A—In 1929, officials reduced the size of U.S. paper money to lower printing costs. The older bills were 1-1/4 inch longer and 1/2 inch wider than modern-day "greenbacks." Your silver certificate still is "legal tender" for \$1, but a collector might offer you \$5 or more.

The government no longer redeems silver certificates for silver coins or silver granules.

Q—Are Indian-head nickels without dates worth keeping?

J. H., Itasca

A—Some dealers will pay from 10 to 15 cents each for such coins. Certain acids will "restore" the date by dissolving metal around the worn digits, but the acids leave dark smudges.

Q—What's a "whizzed coin"?

J. M., Chicago

A—The term refers to a rarity that has been polished or cleaned in an attempt to earn it a grade classification that's higher than its "wear level" would merit. Collectors usually shun such coins.